

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4534
INFO AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 2582

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, DR
SUBJECT: DOMINICAN REPUBLIC EXPECTANTLY AWAITS LAST WEEKEND OF
ELECTORAL ACTIVITY

1. WITH ONLY FOUR DAYS TO GO UNTIL MAY 16 ELECTIONS, DOMINICANS ARE WAITING WITH GREAT EXPECTATION THE EVENTS OF THE LAST WEEK-END OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY BY BOTH THE GOVERNING REFORMIST PARTY AND THE OPPOSITION PRD. THERE ALSO IS INTENSE SPECULATION IN ALL SECTORS OVER THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTIONS, WHICH HAVE BEEN, ACCORDING TO ALL OBSERVERS, MORE INTENSELY CONTESTED THAN THOSE OF 1966, WHEN PRESIDENT BALAGUER WON THE FIRST OF HIS THREE ELECTIONS.

2. THE POLITICAL NEWS OF THE LAST FEW DAYS HAS BEEN DOMINATED BY CONCERN THAT THE PRESENT POLITICAL CLIMATE, TO DATE NOTABLY CALM, BE MAINTAINED THROUGH ELECTION DAY. MUCH ATTENTION HAS FOCUSED ON THE AFTERMATH OF AN INCIDENT LAST SUNDAY IN THE TOWN OF SAN FRANCISCO DE MACORIS WHEN A ROCK-THROWING MELEE DURING A PRD MARCH RESULTED IN THE FIRING OF WEAPONS BY MILITARY AND POLICE, WOUNDING OF SEVERAL PRD DEMONSTRATORS AND THE DETENTION OF APPROXIMATELY ONE HUNDRED PRD MEMBERS. LOCAL OPINION WAS SKEPTICAL OF A REPORT ISSUED BY AN INVESTIGATING TEAM OF TWO GENERALS SENT TO THE SCENE. IT BLAMED
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THE DEMONSTRATORS FOR THE VIOLENCE, RECOMMENDING THAT THEY BE CHARGED WITH DISORDERLY CONDUCT, AND EXCUSED MILITARY AND POLICE OF ANY WRONG-DOING IN THE AFFAIR. THE BISHOP OF SAN FRANCISCO DE MACORIS ISSUED A STATEMENT CONDEMNING BOTH CROWD VIOLENCE AND EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES. ALL THOSE ARRESTED WERE RELEASED BY MAY 10 WITH ALL CHARGES DROPPED AND RELATIVE CALM HAD RETURNED TO

WHAT HAD BEEN A TENSE SITUATION IN THE CITY.

3. OLLDR SCATTERED INCIDENTS OCCURRED AROUND COUNTRY DURING COURSE OF THE WEEK. DRAWING CONSIDERABLE PRESS ATTENTION WAFR FIREBOMBING OF AUTOMOBILE BELONGING TO WELL-KNOWN PRD SUPPORTER. PRESS EXPLAINED THAT POSSIBLE REASON FOR BOMBING WAS PRD VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE JACOBO MAJLUTA FREQUENTLY USED IT. PRD SEC GEN JOSE FRANCISCO PENA GOMEZ, WHO HAS BEEN MAKING DAILY RADIO BROADCASTS, URGED PRD MEMBERS TO REMAIN CALM IN FINAL DAYS OF CAMPAIGN BUT TO REMAIN ALERT TO POSSIBLE ACTIONS BY "ANTI-DEMOCRATIC" SECTORS OF THE REFORMIST PARTY. PENA ANNOUNCED THAT HE IS REQUESTING POLICE PROTECTION FOR WIND-UP RALLY OF THE PRD NATION WIDE IN SANTO DOMINGO ON SAUNDAY, MAY 14, TO AVOID ANY DISTURBANCES WHICH MIGHT MAR THE EVENT. ONE SOURCE OF POSSIBLE FRICTION THAT SAME DAY IS A PLANNED REFORMISTA DEMONSTRATION IN A DIFFERENT PART OF THE CAPITAL.

4. PRD GATHERING WILL ALSO BE CAREFULLY WATCHED AS INDICATION OF PARTY STRENGTH, ONE OF FEW CRUDE YARDSTICKS FOR MEASURING SUCH THINGS. FORTE OF PRD'S GROWING ELECTORAL FORTUNES HAS BEEN ABILITY TO GATHER IMPRESSIVE CROWDS. MOST SUCCESSFUL RALLY TOOK PLACE TWO WEEKS AGO IN SANTIAGO, HEART OF POPULOUS CIBAO VALLEY AND HISTORICALLY A BALAGUER STRONGHOLD, WHERE PRD CLAIMED 200,000 ATTENDED. ATTEMPTING TO BEAT PRD AT OWN GAME, REFORMISTA'S ARE FRANTICALLY WORKING FOR GATHERING THIS SATURDAY IN SANTIAGO WHICH THEY CLAIM WILL CONFIDENTIAL

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DRAW 300,000 FROM CIBAO. BALAGUER "CAMPAIGN MANAGER" FOR CIBAO, SENATOR "CHINO" PICHARDO, IS RELIABLY REPORTED TO BE EMPLOYING MASSIVE FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO ASSURE HEAVY TURNOUT. TACTIC CARRIES SOME DANGER FOR BALAGUER CAMPAIGN BECAUSE, AS REFORMISTA LEADERS ARE WONT TO SAY, THEY ARE COUNTING ON SO-CALLED "SILENT MAJORITY", WHICH DOES NOT ATTEND RALLIES, TO WIN BALAGUER'S REELECTION.

5. SPECULATION IN LAST DAYS OF CAMPAIGN OVER FINAL OUTCOME OF ELECTIONS IS INTENSE AND DOMINATES ALL CONVERSATION. COLUMNISTS IN SANTO DOMINGO'S AFTERNOON TABLOIDS HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY DARING IN DISCUSSING POSSIBILITY OF A PRD UPSET

VICTORY. TODAY'S PAPERS ALL CARRIED DEODJLED POLL BY LEADING MARKETING AND POLLING ORGANIZATION, CIMERS, WHICH SHOWS PRD LEADING REFORMIST PARTY NATIONWIDE BY 164,000 VOTES AND WINNING IN 19 OF 27 PROVINCES (INCLUDING SANTO DOMINGO NATIONAL DISTRICT BY NEARLY 100,000 VOTES). DOMINICANS DO NOT USUALLY TAKE SUCH POLLS SERIOUSLY BECAUSE POLL RESULTS HAVE TRADITIONALLY BEEN SUBJECT TO SALE TO HIGHEST BIDDER. CIMERS ITSELF, SAID TO HAVE CAPACITY TO CONDUCT SCIENTIFIC POLLING, EARLIER IN YEAR DID POLL FOR "CHINO"

PICHARDO SHOWING HE WAS FAVORED WITHIN REFORMIST PARTY FOLLOWING AS BALAGUER'S RUNNING MATE, A POSSIBILITY WHICH WAS UNIVERSALLY DISCOUNTED BY ANYONE WHO KNOWS CHINO. HOWEVER, CIMERS POLL IS GIVEN GREATER WEIGHT BECAUSE IT FAVORS PRD, WHICH NOT GENERALLY CONSIDERED TO BE IN FINANCIAL POSITION TO PURCHASE POLLING RESULTS. CIMERS DIRECTOR CAMINERO WAS DETAINED BY CHIEF OF SECRET POLICE TUESDAY AND TAKEN TO SEE NATIONAL POLICE CHIEF MGEN. NEIT NIVAR. ALTHOUGH DETAILS OF ENCOUNTER WERE NOT DIVULGED, NIVAR LATER SAID HE HAD "INVITED" CAMINERO FOR A TALK AND CIMERS DIRECTOR WAS AT NO TIME UNDER ARREST.

6. EMBASSY OFFICER WAS CALLED BY NIVAR POLITICAL ADVISOR AND LOCAL BUSINESSMAN WHO WANTED TO TALK URGENTLY. NIVAR
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AIDE SLOUGHED OFF CIMERS RESULTS AND CLAIMED GOVERNMENT HAD CONDUCTED OWN "SCIENTIFIC" SURVEY WHICH SHOWED TEN-PERCENTAGE POINT OF REFORMIST PARTY OVER PRD. ACTUALLY NIVAR ALLY MORE INTERESTED IN SOUNDING OUT EMBASSY'S JUDGMENT OF REFORMISTA FINDING BALAGUER WOULD WIN WITH 55 PERCENT.

7. SPECULATION ALTERNATES NERVOUSLY BETWEEN QUESTION OF WHO WILL WIN AND WHAT MILITARY WILL DO IF IT IS THE PRD. THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE REDUCTION OF TENSIONS OVER FORCEFUL MOVE BY MILITARY, EITHER DURING OR AFTER ELECTIONS, BUT THE FEAR IS STILL THERE. MANNER IN WHICH SECURITY FORCES COMPORT THEMSELVES DURING PRD'S GRAND FINALE HERE IN SANTO DOMINGO SUNDAY, SUBJECT OF SEVERAL DISTURBING REPORTS REACHING EMBASSY TODAY AND CARRIED IN OTHER CHANNELS, COULD BE DETERMINANT FACTOR IN LAST DAYS OF CAMPAIGN.
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